THE CONSENSUS TIGURINUS

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Translated by the Rev. Ian D. Bunting

In the current discussions of Reformed confessions the first English translation of this famous ecumenical document may be found of interest. The translator, now vicar of the Parish Church of St. John, Liverpool, prepared his text as part of a master's thesis at Princeton Seminary.

THE *CONSENSUS TIGURINUS*

Undoubtedly the most tragic feature of the Reformation was the theological dissension which followed immediately upon its inception. That this division should center upon the doctrine of the Lord's Supper was particularly painful, not least to the Reformers themselves. There were numerous attempts to heal the wound and the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549) marks a considerable success after years of doctrinal chaos.

When Luther met Zwingli at Marburg in 1529, it soon became apparent that there was a vital difference between them concerning the presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For Luther it was a simple matter of faith that Christ could be present both in heaven and in the sacrament. To Zwingli this was totally illogical and their disagreement ushered in a period of mutual recriminations and conflict on the matter. It was Bucer who stepped into the breach and in 1536 managed to unite the diverse opinions of the Swiss in the *First Helvetic Confession.* This certainly marked a step towards Luther and Bucer had high hopes that it would be accepted at the Wittenberg Conference a few months later, but in the absence of the Swiss a Concord was drawn up which spoke of Christ being "substantially" present in the sacrament. The Swiss were suspicious. Luther, at the time, was ill. Slowly Bucer's influence began to wane.

Meanwhile, John Calvin's star was beginning to rise following the publication of the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536. He was a young man with new ideas and, unlike Bucer, he had a convincing independence. His own ecumenical activities began in the early months of 1540 with a cordial letter addressed to Zwingli's successor, Henry Bullinger, in Zurich. It was the beginning of an association

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which was to lead, nine years later, to the *Consensus Tigurinus*. Things were slow in moving at first, but they were spurred on by Luther's violent outburst against the scholars of Zurich in 1543, followed not long after by his scurrilous parody of the first Psalm: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the sacramentarians, nor stands in the way of the Zwinglians, nor sits in the seat of the Zurichers." Something had to be done. It was imperative that in the face of a militant Luther, mounting political pressure against Protestant Christians from Francis I and a growing dissatisfaction with the efforts of Bucer, some effort should be made to unite the Swiss as a preliminary to wider union.

The story of the final stages of the negotiations must of necessity be based on the letters of Calvin and Bullinger. In all, Calvin made five visits to Zurich, but only in the course of the last visit was the crucial issue of the Lord's Supper brought up and settled. We will never know why it was that Bullinger preferred discussion by post. It was certainly a most unsatisfactory method, for in those days postal messengers were notoriously unreliable.

Towards the end of 1545 Bullinger had drawn up a tract on the Lord's Supper [1] and a copy of the revised version was sent to Calvin. Having discussed it with Farel, he sent a frank reply to Zurich making no attempt to avoid treading on Bullinger's toes and yet hoping that it would not prove a stone of stumbling between them. Bullinger argues "whoever believes in Christ, is justified by his faith before he communicates in the sacraments, therefore it is obvious that grace is not conferred through the sacraments." "But with me," replies Calvin, "the opposite argument is valid: because we are justified by faith, therefore grace is conferred upon us by the sacraments, for they are exercises of faith which heap upon us such spiritual gifts that they make us partakers of Christ and advance our faith." [2] Unfortunately, although he had asked for honest criticism of his work, Bullinger was not pleased with the blunt comments of Calvin, and he did not answer the letter. Thereafter it was Calvin who took the initiative in spasmodic letters which pleaded for personal discussion and agreement. In December 1548, Bullinger was moved to compile twenty-four propositions which he sent to

[1] *Absoluta de Christi Domini et catholicae eius ecclesiae sacramentis tractatio,* 1546.

[2] *Corpus Reformatorum, Calvini Opera,* Brunsvigae, 1863–1900, 12.483, (Ep. 880). (Abbreviated *C.O.* in the remaining footnotes.)

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Calvin for his comments.[3] Calvin's reply in some ways represented a rapprochement and the end was in sight.

On March 12th, 1549, the synod of the German clergy met at Berne. Calvin had forwarded to this synod a confession concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in twenty articles. Although it was never presented to the assembly, it was to form the basis of the *Consensus Tigurinus* in May. Bullinger, meanwhile, was admitting to a better understanding of Calvin's position, even though he was not willing to unite Holy Spirit and Sacrament in quite the same way as Calvin. On May 20th Calvin left for Zurich, where his conference with Bullinger was a complete success and after only two hours discussion, the *Consensus Tigurinus* was drawn up in twenty-four articles.

The story does not, however, end at that point. Initially it was no more than a mutual agreement between John Calvin, William Farel and the ministers of Zurich. If it were to become a symbol of unity among the Swiss churches, it would require the signatures of the other cities. Though Farel was impatient for publication, Bullinger and Calvin favoured private negotiation first. Most cities accepted the Agreement heartily. Berne was slow in coming to a decision but, by September, with the addition of two letters in place of the preface and postscript, they were in general doctrinal agreement. With certain modifications of a minor nature,[4] Lausanne welcomed the document. At Basel, Myconius was a little put out because he had not been consulted, but then, as Calvin explains, there hadn't been time, and, in any case, it had been welcomed by Bucer who had not been consulted either. As in Berne and Lausanne so in Basel there was now general, if not unanimous, concord.

The response which the *Consensus Tigurinus* drew from quarters outside Switzerland was mixed. From England there came letters of congratulation from all sides.[5] Bucer expressed his approval as early as August 1549, whilst Peter Martyr wrote to Bullinger enthusiastically urging even deeper union. The *Consensus Tigurinus*

[3] *C.O.* 13.115 ff., (Ep. 1104). The text of the propositions and the annotations is given in *C.O.* 7.693 ff. Cf. also André Bouvier, *Henry Bullinger*, Neuchatel, 1940, "Appendix," pp. 472 ff., where he gives the details of the background and writing of the 24 propositions.

[4] *C.O.* 13.305 ff., (Ep. 1211). The changes concern articles 5, 8 and 23 and are referred to at the appropriate place in the text.

[5] Richard Hilles even congratulated Bullinger before he had read the document.

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might even have been acceptable to the majority of Lutherans had it not been for the obstruction of men like Westphal and Heshusius. As it was, the Lutherans thought Calvin had failed them.

The text of the agreement was not officially published until 1551 though its content was soon well known throughout the Protestant world. It was Calvin who pressed for publication. "Since certain individuals of a malignant, fretful and ill-natured disposition are creating a disturbance about our union, I would like it to be published if that suits you. . . . I would on no account allow it to be published, until I had your consent." Bullinger agreed and, in February, Calvin received the first incomplete folio copy from Zurich. The Genevan edition appeared in March and in the same year German and French translations of the text were also printed.

The English translation which follows is based primarily on the Zurich text as it appears in: Joannis Calvini, *Opera Selecta,* ed. Petrus Barth and Gulielmus Niesel, Vol. II, München, 1952. It has been compared with the critical text in the *Corpus Reformatorum,*[6] and also with the French text in *Calvin, homme d'église.*[7] The critical notes in the text appear at points where, in the opinion of the translator, they may be relevant.

The Agreement represents the combined work of two of the greatest Christian thinkers of their day. Excluding the heresies or inadequacies of Rome, Luther and early Zwinglianism, it allows complete freedom of understanding about the positive presence of Christ in the Supper. This is something which the family of Reformed Churches needs to recover today.

* * *

AGREEMENT OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF ZURICH AND OF JOHN CALVIN, MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF GENEVA, ON THE SUBJECT OF THE SACRAMENT

JOHN CALVIN SENDS GREETINGS TO HIS WELL-LOVED COLLEAGUES AND RESPECTED BROTHERS, MOST EXCELLENT MEN AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST, THE PASTORS AND DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH AT ZURICH.

Although I often discuss the same subject with you, yet I do not think I need fear being considered irksome by you. When we are in

[6] *C.O.* 7.733–748.

[7] *Calvin, homme d'église,* Genève: Éditions Labor, 1936, pp. 131–142.

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agreement, you can hardly disapprove of what I do. As for the suggestion that I am a little too keen, I am urged on by the earnest pleadings of good men.

I have already warned you on a number of occasions, not without cause, that many are offended because I seem to hold some view of the sacraments other than your own. They justly reverence your church which is adorned with so many excellent gifts: and they also defer somewhat to our church and perhaps even to me too as an individual. And so they want to be assisted in learning holy doctrine from our writings in order that no appearance of division may retard their own progress. For this reason, I thought there could be no fitter remedy for removing this scandal than a friendly conference for the purpose of testifying to our agreement. You know that it was in the pursuit of this end that I came to you. And our venerable colleague, William Farel, that indefatigable soldier of Christ, did not refuse to come with me. He was, moreover, the prompter of my visit and my guide. On both sides then we can now certainly and confidently affirm that we are in agreement. However because I am unable to persuade all of this fact, it greatly grieves me that there are some who remain in doubt or anxiety. And it is their peace of mind that I would rather consider. Hence, as I said at the beginning, I do not think that I am acting out of season when I urge that there should be some public testimony of the agreement we have now concluded.

In fact, I thought it would be worthwhile briefly to collect and set in order the heads upon which we have conferred, so that if my plan approves itself to you, each may discern for himself, in tabular form, what was done and transacted between us. I feel sure that you will bear witness that I have recounted in good faith the details of our discussions which I now set down. For the rest, I hope that Christian readers will notice that we (that is Farel and myself) have desired, with a zeal like yours, a sincere clarity of expression free from all pretence and guile. At the same time I would have it understood that this work contains nothing which has not been officially approved by our colleagues who serve Christ in the republic of Geneva or the canton of Neuchâtel. Farewell, most excellent men and brethren, to whom I owe heartfelt respect. May the Lord continue to direct you by his Spirit for the building up of the church; and may he bless your labours. Geneva, 1st August 1549.

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THE ARTICLES OF THE AGREEMENT FOLLOW

I. THE WHOLE SPIRITUAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH LEADS US TO CHRIST. Since Christ is the end of the law, and knowledge of him comprehends, in itself, the sum total of the gospel, there is no doubt that the whole spiritual government of the church aims to bring us to Christ: for it is through him alone that a man comes to God, who is the ultimate end of a blessed life.[8] And so whoever draws away from this in the slightest point will never be able to speak rightly or appositely of any of God's ordinances.

II. THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SACRAMENTS FROM THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. Since the sacraments are appendices to the gospel, one can only speak fittingly and usefully of their nature, force, office and fruit[9] when one starts from Christ. And one is not only to touch lightly upon the name of Christ, but one is to hold true to the purpose for which he was given to us by the Father and to those good things which he has brought us.

III. THE NATURE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. Thus it is to be maintained that Christ, being the eternal Son of God of the same glory and essence with the Father, has taken upon himself our flesh to bring to us, by right of adoption, what belonged to him by nature: namely, that we may be sons of God. This happens when we, ingrafted by faith into the body of Christ and that by virtue of the Holy Spirit, are first accounted just by a free imputation of righteousness[10] and then are regenerated into new life, whereby being formed again in the image of our heavenly Father, we renounce the old man.

IV. CHRIST AS PRIEST: CHRIST AS KING. Thus we have to consider Christ in his flesh as priest, who expiated our sins by the unique sacrifice of his own death. It is he who has put away all our iniquities by his obedience,[11] who has acquired[12] for us perfect righteousness and who now intercedes for us to give us access to God. He must be reckoned too as an expiatory victim[13] by which

[8] *ultimus est beatae vitae finis.*

[9] *de eorum natura, vi, officio et fructu.*

[10] *gratuita iustitiae imputatione.*

[11] French: *a obtenu pardon de nos péchés et par son obéissance a effacé toutes nos iniquités.*

[12] *comparavit.*

[13] French: *sacrifice abolissant les péchés.*

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God is reconciled to the world. He is also to be reckoned a brother who has made us blessed sons of God who were once miserable sons of Adam. He is also to be reckoned as a repairer who reforms whatever is vicious in us by the virtue of his Spirit, so that we may cease to live after the world and the flesh and so that God himself may abide in us. He must be reckoned as king, who enriches us with every kind of good thing, who rules and protects us by his power,[14] who provides us with spiritual weapons that we may stand unconquered against the world and the devil,[15] who frees us from all harm and who governs and guides us by the sceptre of his mouth. And he is to be so reckoned in all his qualities that he may bring us[16] to himself as true God and to the Father,[17] until that which will be at the end is fulfilled; namely, until God is all in all.

V. HOW CHRIST COMMUNICATES HIMSELF TO US. Moreover, in order that Christ may exhibit[18] himself to us in this way and produce these effects in us, we must be made one with him and grow together into his body. For he does not pour out his life into us unless he is our head from which the whole body, compacted and connected through every joint of supply, makes for the increase of each member of the body by proportion according to his working.[19]

VI. SPIRITUAL COMMUNION. THE SACRAMENTS INSTITUTED. This spiritual communion which we have with the Son of God, when he lives in us by his Spirit, makes every believer a partaker[20] of all the blessings which reside in him. To testify to this, the preaching of the

[14] *virtute.*

[15] Geneva: omits "that we . . . the devil."

[16] *evehat.*

[17] French: *Et le nous faut tellement considérer en toutes ces qualités qu'il nous élève a sa majesté divine et à celle de son Père.*

[18] *ut se nobis talem exhibeat Christus.*

[19] This article was missing in the original versions of the *Consensus Tigurinus.* It was included at the request of Calvin and with the agreement of Bullinger. Cf. *C.O.* 13. 305, (Ep. 1211), "First, where we say that Christ in his flesh is to be reckoned as priest, king etc., and we then continue with: *This communion is spiritual,* this is clearly too abrupt. But the error may easily be corrected by inserting this sentence: *Porro . . . augmentum corporis facit.* I know of nothing in these words which might upset you. And it is quite essential that some such sentence be woven into the document."

[20] *compotes.*

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gospel was instituted and the use of the sacraments was intrusted to us, namely the sacraments of holy Baptism and the holy Supper.[21]

VII. THE ENDS OF THE SACRAMENTS. The ends of the sacraments are that they may be marks and badges of Christian profession [22] and of our community or brotherhood, to incite us to thanksgiving and exercises of faith and godly living and to be contracts binding us to this.[23] But the end which is first among the others is that through them God may testify, represent and seal [24] his grace to us. For although they signify nothing that is not announced by the word, yet it is a great benefit that there is cast before our eyes, as it were, living pictures which influence our senses in a deeper way, as if leading up to the thing itself; while they recall to our memory the death of Christ and all his benefits so that our faith may better be exercised. It is also a great benefit [25] that what God has pronounced with his mouth, is confirmed and ratified as if by seals.

VIII. THE LORD TRULY PRESENTS WHAT THE SACRAMENTS TRULY FIGURE.[26] THANKSGIVING.[27] Since the testimonies and seals,[28] which God has given us of his grace, are true; there can be no doubt that God grants within us by his Spirit that which the sacraments figure to our eyes and other senses.[29] That is: that we may receive [30] Christ, as the fountain of all good, both that we may be reconciled to God by means of his death and renewed by the Spirit [31] to holiness of life, and that we may obtain righteousness [32] and

21 The first six articles of the *Consensus Tigurinus* find no parallels in the 20 articles offered by Calvin to the Synod of Berne in March 1549, cf. *C.O.* 7.717–722.

22 *ut notae sint ac tesserae christianae professionis.*

23 Cf. *C.O.* 7.717. Article 1 of the Berne Synod articles omits this first sentence: "The ends . . . to this." The remainder of article 7 is an expanded version of the first Berne article.

24 *testetur Deus, repraesentet atque obsignet.*

25 French: *Et aussi ce n'est point peu de chose.*

26 Geneva: omits "The Lord . . . truly figure."

27 *Gratiarum actio.*

28 *sigilla.*

29 French: *tout ce que les sacrements figurent par dehors.*

30 *potiamur.*

31 French: omits, "by the Spirit."

32 French: *étant justifié.*

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finally salvation. At the same time we give thanks for these benefits once exhibited [33] on the cross, which we now perceive daily by faith.[34]

IX. THE SIGNS AND THE THINGS SIGNIFIED ARE DISTINCT.[35] Therefore although we draw a distinction, as we must, between the signs and the things signified, yet we do not disjoin the truth from the signs. But we acknowledge that all who embrace in faith the promises there offered, receive Christ spiritually with his spiritual gifts,[36] and even those who for a long time have been partakers of Christ continue and renew that communion.

X. IT IS PRINCIPALLY THE PROMISE THAT IS TO BE REGARDED IN THE SACRAMENTS. One must not look to the bare signs but rather to the promise attached to them. Inasmuch, therefore, as our faith profits from the promise offered, so that force and efficacy of which we speak displays itself. Thus the element [37] of water, bread or wine by no means offers us Christ, nor makes us possessors of his spiritual gifts. Rather, one must look at the promise, whose office it is to lead us to Christ by the true way of faith, which makes us partakers of Christ.

XI. WE ARE NOT TO GAZE IN BEWILDERMENT [38] AT THE ELEMENTS. This defeats the error of those who gaze in bewilderment [39] at the elements and attach to them their confidence of salvation. For the sacraments, separated from Christ, are nothing but empty masks: [40] yet in them all a voice clearly resounds, telling us to hold fast to none other than Christ alone and to seek the grace of salvation nowhere else.

33 French: "*tels benefices qui nous ont une fois été donnés.*"—It is interesting that the translator (who may have been Calvin himself) should render *exhibitis* as *donnés,* "given". This may shed some light on the meaning which Calvin attaches to *exhibeo,* a word which he uses constantly in his sacramental writings.

34 This clause originally read: "and truly perceived by us through faith." It was changed at the request of Calvin, cf. *C.O.* 13.306, (Ep. 1211), "afterwards I noticed that the unevenness of the work could be mitigated somewhat in this way: *et quae quotidie fide percipimus.* Thus the meaning will be more complete."

35 Geneva: "are not disjoined but are distinct."

36 *Christum spiritualiter, cum spiritualibus eius donis recipere.*

37 *materia.*

38 *obstupescendum.*

39 French: *ceux qui s'amusent, comme étourdis.*

40 *inanes larvae.*

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XII. THE SACRAMENTS ACHIEVE NOTHING OF THEMSELVES. EVERY SAVING ACT IS TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO GOD ALONE. Besides, if any good thing is bestowed upon us through the sacraments, it is not because of any inherent virtue,[41] not even if you understand by that the promise by which they are distinguished. For it is God alone who works by his Spirit. And although he uses the ministry of the sacraments, he neither infuses his own power into them nor does he derogate in any way from the efficacy of his Spirit: but according to our ignorance,[42] he uses them as helps,[43] yet so that all the power remains with him alone.

XIII. GOD USES THE INSTRUMENT, BUT ONLY IN SUCH A WAY THAT ALL THE VIRTUE IS HIS. And so, as Paul warns us, he who sows or waters is nothing, but it is God alone who gives the increase. The same must be said of the sacraments, that they are nothing, because they will profit nothing unless God in all things makes them effective. They are indeed instruments[44] by which God acts efficaciously, when he so pleases; yet in such a way that the whole work of our salvation must be ascribed to him alone.

XIV. We conclude therefore that it is Christ alone who truly baptizes within and who in the Supper makes us partakers of himself. In brief, it is he who fulfils what the sacraments figure, and he uses these aids in such a way that the whole effect rests in his Spirit.[45]

XV. HOW THE SACRAMENTS CONFIRM. In this way the sacraments are sometimes called seals, and are said to nourish, confirm and promote faith: and yet in the proper sense the Spirit alone is the seal,[46] inasmuch as he is the one who begins and perfects faith. For all these attributes of the sacraments take an inferior place, so that not even the smallest portion of our salvation may be transferred from the single author of it, to the creatures or elements.

[41] *propria eorum virtute.*

[42] French: omits "according to our ignorance."

[43] French: *il s'en sert comme d'aides inférieures.*

[44] *organa.*—Article 9 of the Berne Synod articles uses *instrumenta* instead, cf. *C.O.* 7.719.

[45] French: *toute la vertu procède de son Esprit et tout l'effet y réside.*

[46] French: *le sceau souverain.*

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XVI. NOT ALL PARTAKERS IN THE SACRAMENT RECEIVE THE THING ITSELF. Besides, we are careful to teach that God does not exert his power indiscriminately in all who receive the sacraments, but only in the elect. For as he only illuminates into faith [47] those whom he has foreordained to life; so by the secret virtue of his Spirit, he works that the elect may receive what the sacraments offer.[48]

XVII. THE SACRAMENTS DO NOT CONFER GRACE. By this doctrine, that fiction of the Sophists is refuted which teaches that the sacraments of the new law confer grace on all who do not interpose the obstacle of mortal sin. For besides the fact that nothing is received in the sacraments except by faith, it is also necessary to hold that the grace of God is certainly not so tied to them that whoever has the sign receives the thing itself. For the signs are administered to the reprobate as well as to the elect, but the reality only reaches the latter.

XVIII. THE GIFTS OF GOD ARE OFFERED TO ALL BUT IT IS THE FAITHFUL WHO RECEIVE THEM. It is quite certain that Christ, with his gifts, is offered communely to all, and that the truth of God is not overthrown by the unfaithfulness of men: the sacraments always retain their power,[49] but all are not capable of Christ and his gifts. And so on God's part, nothing is changed, but as for men; each receives according to the measure of his faith.

XIX. THE FAITHFUL COMMUNICATE IN CHRIST [50] BOTH BEFORE AND OUTSIDE THE USE OF THE SACRAMENTS. And as the use of the sacraments is no more profitable to the unfaithful than if they abstained, yet is rather destructive to them: so on the other hand even outside the use of the sacraments the reality which is figured remains firm for the faithful. Thus the sins of Paul were washed away by Baptism, although they had already been washed before Baptism. Likewise for Cornelius, Baptism was the laver of regeneration, although he had already received the Holy Spirit. Thus in the Supper Christ communicates himself to us, although he has imparted himself to us

[47] French: omits "into faith."

[48] Article 12 of the Berne Synod articles here reads: "so by the secret and unique virtue of his Spirit, he works so that to those alone the sacraments may exhibit that which they offer." Cf. *C.O.* 7.719.

[49] French: *leur nature et vigueur.*

[50] "in Christ" seems to be the best translation of the dative *Christo.*

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before [51] and dwells within us for ever. For since all are commanded to examine themselves, it follows that faith is required of all before they approach the sacrament. And faith cannot exist without Christ; but inasmuch as faith is confirmed and increased by the sacraments, the gifts of God are confirmed in us and so, in a manner of speaking, Christ grows in us and we in him.

XX. THE GRACE IS NOT SO TIED TO THE ACTION OF THE SACRAMENTS THAT THE FRUIT OF THEM MAY NOT BE RECEIVED SOMETIME AFTER THE ACTION. Moreover the benefit which we receive from the sacraments ought not to be restricted to the time at which they are administered to us, as though the visible sign, when it is offered, brought with it at that very moment the grace of God. For those who were baptized in first infancy God regenerates in childhood or at the start of adolescence [52] or even sometimes in old age. So the benefit of Baptism stretches through the whole course of life, because the promise contained within it lives for ever. And sometimes it can happen that the use of the holy Supper, which in the action itself profits very little because of our thoughtlessness or slowness of heart, yet afterwards bears its fruit.[53]

XXI. THE IDEA OF A LOCAL PRESENCE IS TO BE REJECTED. It is particularly necessary to reject every idea of a local presence. For as the signs are present in this world and are perceived with the eyes and touched with the hands, so Christ, as man, is nowhere but in heaven and is to be sought in no other way than by the mind and the understanding of faith.[54] For this reason it is a perverse and impious superstition to enclose him under elements of this world.

XXII. AN EXPOSITION OF THE WORDS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: THIS IS MY BODY. We reject therefore those ridiculous interpreters who insist on what they call the precise literal sense of the solemn words of the Supper—This is my body, this is my blood. For without question we hold that they are to be taken figuratively, so that the

[51] Article 15 of the Berne Synod articles omits: "although he has imparted himself to us before." Cf. *C.O.* 7.720.

[52] *ineunte adolescentia.*

[53] French: *meilleur fruit.*

[54] *mente et fidei intelligentia.*

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bread and wine are said to be that which they signify.[55] And it ought not to be thought new or insolent that by metonymy the name of the thing signified is transferred to the sign, since in the Scriptures the same modes of expression occur, and in speaking in this way we affirm nothing which is not prominent in the most ancient and famous writers of the church.[56]

XXIII. CONCERNING THE EATING OF CHRIST'S FLESH. Because Christ feeds our souls [57] through faith by virtue of his Spirit, by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood which are here figured, it is not therefore to be understood as though there was an intermingling or transfusion of substance.[58] But we draw life from the flesh once offered in sacrifice and the blood poured out for expiation.[59]

XXIV. AGAINST TRANSUBSTANTIATION AND OTHER MADNESSES. In this way not only the fiction of the papists about transubstantiation is refuted, but also all stupid fantasies and worthless quibbles which either derogate from his heavenly glory or do not really agree with the truth of his [60] human nature. And we judge that it is not less absurd to place Christ under the bread or to couple him with the bread than to transubstantiate the bread into his body.

[55] French: *Car nous tenons pour tout notoire que ces mots doivent être sainement interprétés et avec discrétion, à savoir que les noms de ce que le pain et le vin signifient leur sont attribués.*

[56] This article has no parallel in the Berne Synod article.

[57] *animas nostras.*

[58] *substantiae vel commixtio vel transfusio.*

[59] This article was added at the request of Calvin with Bullinger's approval. Cf. *C.O.* 13.306, (Ep. 1211), "After the 18th paragraph, where we give a figurative exposition of the words of the Supper: This is my body, This is my blood, I thought it would not be inappropriate if all access to uncertainty be removed. For without doubt there are certain good men who will take it ill that there is no mention of the reality, when thus far it is called a sign and when moreover there is no mention of the eating of the flesh in the whole work. Inasmuch therefore as we cannot be too careful that our words do not smell of contact with worthless opinions, we must be diligent that reasonable men may not justly find here anything which is less than satisfactory. It would not be difficult to give satisfaction if some explanation like this were to be included: *Quod autem . . . hauriamus.* I think that this also contains nothing that will displease you or that can be suspected by others or that in the future will become subject to misinterpretation."

[60] Geneva: omits "his."

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XXV. THE BODY OF CHRIST IS IN HEAVEN AS IN A PLACE. And in order that no ambiguity may remain; when we say that Christ is to be sought in heaven, this saying implies and expresses to us separation in space.[61] For although, speaking philosophically, there is no place above the skies, yet the body of Christ, bearing the nature and fashion of a human body, is finite and is contained in heaven as in a place. It is necessary that it be separated from us by such an interval of space, in the same way as the heaven is separated from the earth.

XXVI. CHRIST IS NOT TO BE ADORED IN THE BREAD OR IN THE SACRAMENT.[62] And if it is not right to affix Christ to the bread and the wine by our imagination, much less is it lawful to adore him in the bread. For although the bread is given to us as a symbol and pledge [63] of that communion which we have with Christ yet it is a sign and not the thing itself, and because it does not have the thing included in it or attached to it, therefore those who turn their minds to the thing, in adoring Christ, make an idol of it.

THE REPLY OF THE ZURICHERS TO CALVIN'S WRITING.

THE PASTORS, DOCTORS AND MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF ZURICH SEND GREETINGS TO THEIR DEAR BROTHER JOHN CALVIN, FAITHFUL PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF GENEVA.

Calvin, most reverend brother in the Lord, your great zeal and careful labours daily to illuminate the doctrine of the sacraments and to remove from the church the offences which seem to have arisen from some rather obscure explanation of the mysteries, are so far from being irksome to us that we judge them not only worthy of proclamation with praise, but also worthy to be emphasized and imitated by us to the best of our ability. For while the holy laws of our prince Jesus Christ set down all actions for the purpose of cultivating charity or zeal for brotherly love, there is nothing they prohibit more severely than for anyone to cause offence to another so that he cannot make a right judgement concerning these things, the knowledge of which is necessary or at least useful and salutary

[61] *locorum distantiam.*
[62] Geneva: omits "or in the sacrament."
[63] *symbolum et pignus.*

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for men, or so that he cannot perform that duty which he owes to God first and then to his neighbours. With the same weight these laws command us to remove, as far as we can, those obstacles over which men continually stumble. For this reason the coming of both William Farel, our revered brother, and yourself seemed to us most creditable and specially worthy of leading churchmen. The first object in this friendly colloquium was to expound to each other, as simply as possible, our position with regard to the sacraments especially on those heads where admittedly there has been some controversy until now among those who on other points have handed on the pure doctrine of the gospel with full agreement. A further purpose was to publish our *Consensus* in writing, as a witness. For we see no other way or more fitting course by which we may abolish religious controversy or suppress empty suspicions where now no divisions exists, or by which offences may be removed which are sometimes born in the church from the controversial opinions of the teachers, than if those who seem to disagree, or do in fact disagree, explain their view openly and in turn, both by word of mouth and written document. However it would be worth little if, when the truth has been sought out and established, it should be retained among them and not be made available also to other men by fuller explanation of those things which had been barely introduced and obscurely expressed, by expounding with clarity what was set forth ambiguously and by making a declaration in definite, appropriate and significant statements. This method was always approved by our fathers in the church, was very often used in settling religious controversies and was never without salutary effect for the church: in short, it was approved by the supreme example of the apostles of Christ, our Lord and God. For as we read in Acts 15, a very great dissension was dissolved in no other way than this when the apostles and their own disciples taught that hearts were purified by faith in the name of Christ and men were saved by his grace alone; but others argued for circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic Law. And so, dear brother Calvin, we cannot but thoroughly approve your holy efforts and those of all pious men who work by suitable arguments to remove offences and to repair the tottering peace and harmony of the church, attempting by simple and accurate explanation to make Christian doctrine more and more lucid and plain and attempting to rid minds of empty and divisive con-

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jectures; and attempting also to bring into true, lasting and holy concord even those who have been in some disagreement of words or opinions.

For the rest, we wanted our published agreement to be witnessed, alike by the pious and the enemies of the truth; and we are led to hope that when it has passed its present test, it will bear the fruit which you foretell in your letter. For we have sent the formula of our mutual agreement to a number of brethren and have shown it here to a number of persons who love Christ and the truth and who are experienced in matters of doctrine. They have not only acknowledged our agreement on those points on which it was commonly reported that we disagreed, but they have also offered thanks to Christ our Saviour, entertaining great hopes of more abundant fruit in the church, as they discern that we are agreed in God and in the truth. Some, however, have wanted a fuller treatment of the argument on account of certain subtle men who, when they heard of our agreement, found it somewhat difficult to admit satisfaction. But what purpose would it serve—an explanation in multitudinous words, that God is author of the sacraments and instituted them for the lawful sons of the church; or that just so many sacraments were given to the church by Christ and the others were devised by men; or what are the parts of the sacrament; or in what place, at what time and by what sacred means the mysteries ought to be celebrated? Our published treatises on the sacraments, or those of our tutors of blessed memory, adequately prove that there has been no appearance or shadow of an argument between us on these or any other points of a similar nature. Indeed we have spoken so fully, plainly and simply of the bodily presence of our Lord Christ, of the genuine meaning of the solemn words, of the manducation of the body of Christ and of the purpose, use and effect of the sacrament (on which issues many have thought our opinions, or certainly our words, to have been hitherto in conflict); of these things we have so spoken that we hope men, anxious for brotherly concord and clear truth, will not find in our work either a lack of fulness or a lack of lucid expression. And we are not diffident that the ministers of the other churches of Christ in Switzerland will also easily admit that we have expressed the same doctrine of the sacraments which has been received by Christian people for many generations, so that in the acknowledged truth they will be

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the last to disagree with us. Not without good reason, we promise ourselves this too for all pious men throughout the churches of other nations.

However, if anyone produces a clearer explanation of the sacraments, we would prefer to use it among the saints, rather than urge one man to subscribe to our agreement; in which nevertheless we have employed the words of sacred scripture and expounded openly in what sense we understand it: indeed we are clearly persuaded that we are in agreement with the catholic church. Moreover, if this document has not removed all the offences which apparent disagreement interposed between us in the ways of the Lord, we will still think, however, that it has admirably borne fruit because we have witnessed to all without obscurity or pretence that we, to whom it has been given by Christ to think and speak in the same terms with regard to the faith, do not differ at all even in the explanation of these mysteries. Farewell dearest brother. Zurich, 30th August 1549.

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